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SENATE PASSES BILL BRINGING FEDERAL LABOR LAW INTO 21ST CENTURY

Rewards workers at all levels, not just execs

WASHINGTON, D.C.— The U.S. Senate today unanimously passed legislation cosponsored by Senator Bob Bennett (R-Utah) which will give American employers the flexibility to reward stock options to all workers regardless of an employee's position or pay scale.

"This bill will help employers reward those American workers who, from every level of the corporate ladder, have been the driving force behind our nation's prosperity," said Bennett. "As we enter the 21st century, a new labor law to meet the new economy makes sense."

Earlier this year, the Department of Labor advised employers that they would be required to include stock options in overtime calculations. The advisory also prescribed an extremely complicated method of calculation that created a virtual administrative impossibility for employers. Businesses stated that the complexity and burden required to comply with the advisory would force them to eliminate stock options for hourly workers.

The Worker Economic Opportunity Act reverses the effect of the Labor Department's advisory, allowing more hourly workers to have an opportunity to own a stake in their company and reap the benefits of its growth. It amends the Fair Labor Standards Act by adding stock options to the list of other benefits, like bonuses, that are excluded from an employee's base pay.

Recognizing the error of her department's original advisory, Secretary of Labor Alexis Herman reversed it and last month endorsed the Senate bill. Identical legislation is pending in the House of Representatives.

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<http://www.senate.gov/~bennett>